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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION APPROVES IDAHO'S NEW ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

BOISE – The U.S. Department of Education announced today it has approved Idaho's new accountability system.

Under this new system, Idaho is able to move away from certain provisions of No Child Left Behind and create a new system of increased accountability that is based on multiple measures of student achievement, including academic growth.

"This is a great day for Idaho students, Idaho schools and Idaho teachers," Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said. "Our previous accountability system was put in place when Idaho's seniors were in second grade. It is a decade old and must be updated to more accurately measure student achievement now and in the future. Through Idaho's new accountability system, we can use multiple measures, including academic growth, to better evaluate how schools are performing statewide. We will use this data to recognize our excellent schools and provide intensive technical assistance to schools that are struggling."

The new accountability system still must receive final approval from the Idaho State Board of Education. The State Board will consider this during its meeting in Lewiston this week. In February, the Idaho State Board of Education voted unanimously to approve Idaho's application for a federal waiver from certain provisions on No Child Left Behind. Now, it must give its approval on the final waiver since changes have been made in the past few months.

In past years, under No Child Left Behind, states could only measure school success based on proficiency – or how many students pass the test. These rankings were announced as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The federal law, which originally passed in 2001, was supposed to be reauthorized four years ago so states could include academic growth, or how much progress a student makes in a given year. Since the law has not been reauthorized, Idaho applied for a federal waiver from certain provisions of the No Child Left Behind law to give the state the flexibility to develop a new accountability system based on multiple measures, including academic growth.

Superintendent Luna and staff at the State Department of Education worked with educational stakeholders to create the new accountability system, known as the Five-Star Rating System.

"Academic growth is a more accurate measure of how students are performing academically and how teachers and educators are working to raise student achievement every year," said Dr. Linda Clark, Superintendent of Joint School District No. 2 in Meridian. "I am so excited the state has applied for and received a waiver so we can now move to a new system of accountability that focuses on growth."

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Dr. Charles Shackett, Superintendent of the Bonneville School District, said: "I am so happy for this new accountability system because it finally provides a true measure of the progress we are making in our schools. By using multiple measures, including academic growth, we know exactly how our students are performing and growing today and where they need to be in the future to graduate from high school prepared for the world that awaits them."

Dr. Wiley Dobbs, Superintendent of the Twin Falls School District, said: "With this waiver, Idaho's schools can now move away from the restrictions of No Child Left Behind to a new system that better measures how well Idaho schools are really preparing students for the 21st century. In Twin Falls, we are excited that this system not only identifies where schools can improve but also publicly recognizes the excellent work schools across Idaho are doing every day for students."

This new accountability system is based on higher standards, academic growth, and improved performance evaluations for educators – all key components of the Students Come First reform laws that passed in 2011.

Under the Five-Star Rating System, schools no longer receive an AYP rating but receive a rating based anywhere from One Star to Five Stars. The new rating system measures academic proficiency on the ISAT as well as growth on the ISAT and postsecondary and career-ready metrics, such as advanced opportunities, college entrance exams and graduation rates.

A Five-Star School is performing excellent in key areas – proficiency, academic growth, and postsecondary and career-ready metrics. A One-Star School, on the other hand, is struggling to meet the state's goals in these areas and will receive additional technical assistance from the state.

In the 2011-2012 school year, more than half of Idaho's schools – 379 schools – were rated as Four-Star and Five-Star Schools. Ninety-nine schools statewide were rated as One-Star and Two-Star Schools. Here is a complete breakdown of the ratings under the new Five-Star Rating System:

<u>Star Rating</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>
5 Star Schools	78
4 Star Schools	301
3 Star Schools	170
2 Star Schools	64
1 Star Schools	35
Total schools	648

Representatives of educational stakeholder groups and members of the public helped to shape Idaho's new accountability system. The Department held focus groups with parents, legislators, classroom teachers, principals, superintendent and school board trustees in October. The public could read and comment on a draft of the Idaho's waiver application throughout the month of January.

To learn more about the new accountability system, visit <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/assessment/FederalReq/>.

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